

## The Wee Small Hours

by xv323

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Summary: Hiccup and Astrid are trying to sleep. The recieved wisdom ought to be that you leave them ALONE when they're trying to do that. However, babies are notoriously bad at adhering to recieved wisdom - they'll make all the racket they want.

## The Wee Small Hours

**\*\*Well lookie here. I be posting somethin'. Aren't I clever.\*\***

**\*\*It's been five months. Five CRAZY months, I might add. Starting Uni? Christ on a Unicycle it's tiring. That is all.\*\***

**\*\*This, though, is a oneshot I found time to write for the theme-specific writing contest they had over at the Sticks and Stones forum a couple of months ago, before all that got going. I enjoyed writing this and I like the result a lot, but I'd be the first to admit it wasn't even in the same \*league\* as some of the stuff that contest produced - it was amazing, sumptuous, beautiful fanfiction of the highest order. I don't know how many of them have found their way onto FF, but it's not all of them - I'd highly recommend you go have a look.\*\***

**\*\*AnyWAYY, this is a very fluffy oneshot, and the theme I chose to aim at, out of the ones we were given to choose from, was 'attention'. As you will see I make this choice rather obvious - rather too obvious really, and this is something I was picked up on in a big way when it came time to judge the contest entries. However, I thought you lot might like a read, and a sign that I am not dead - though with the cough I have at the moment I seem to be heading that way.\*\***

**\*\*I shall stop talking. Enjoy!\*\***

\* \* \*

><p><strong>The Wee Small Hours<strong>

When you are Astrid Hofferson, it does not do to be woken up by a screaming baby in the middle of the night.

When you are Astrid \_Haddock,\_ however, it's pretty much a prerequisite.

Sighing, Astrid rubbed the sleep from her eyes and swung her legs over the edge of the bed for what felt like the hundredth time that night. She ran her hands through her long, blonde and, as of that moment, very messy hair and sat still for a long moment, gathering her strength for the daunting task of standing up and padding across to the wooden cot on the other side of the room.

A groan from the bed behind her indicated that Hiccup too had been roused by the caterwauling infant, and she heard the rustling of the sheets as he turned over in a vain, half-awake attempt to retreat away from the harsh, piercing noise, back into that elusive realm of quiet and uninterrupted sleep.

Turning around, she prodded him in the shoulder. "C'mon, sleepyhead, he's your offspring as well."

She received an unintelligible mumble by way of answer as Hiccup threw the pillow over his head and flung his arm over it. She prodded him again, knowing that he'd join her, at least partially \_compos mentis,\_ in a moment, and finally she forced her weary legs to elevate her to a standing position. Pacing across the uneven wooden floorboards to the source of the noise, trying to avoid them creaking for a reason she wasn't quite sure of, she peered over the lip of the wooden frame into the cot.

"Now, what on earth is wrong with you this time?"

The screaming child in question could not be faulted for consistency. For the last two months since he had been born, Harald Haddock II had woken his parents three times a night, every night, faultlessly timing every single outburst with the point at which either Hiccup or Astrid " or both - were just drifting off to sleep. There were various reasons " he needed changing or feeding, was too hot or cold, or sometimes just seemed to feel like being a royal nuisance, as befitted his father's title of chieftain-in-waiting. Astrid was finding it hard to convince herself by now that the infant had not, during her prolonged pregnancy, been maliciously plotting to deprive her completely of sleep just as soon as he found his way out into the world.

Nonetheless, she scooped the child up in her arms, and began pacing around the room, gently bouncing the baby in her arms in an attempt to soothe him, all the time trying to work out what exactly was amiss.

Hiccup joined her, his prosthetic squeaking slightly, blearily rubbing his eyes just as she had been doing a minute or so beforehand. Wrapping one arm around her waist and mussing the shock of scarlet red hair on the top of the child's head with his free hand, he kissed her on the cheek and asked through a barely-stifled yawn, "Have you got this one, sweetheart, or do you want me to sort

it out?"

"It's not an \_it, \_it's a \_he." \_Astrid replied, her tone falsely accusatory, belying the weary but good-natured smile she was wearing, "Though I'd forgive you for thinking he was a bit of a monster right now."

"Yeah, but he's \_our \_monster."

"Which just means that we brought a monster into the world." Astrid shot back, her grin widening for a moment before she refocused on their still bawling son. "A monster who, for some reason, won't shut up tonight" she continued, tickling Harald on the nose and peering at him intently.

"He is being a bit insistent, isn't he? What's up with him this time, d'you think?"

"Oh, I don't know, probably doesn't like the colour of the ceiling" Astrid replied offhandedly, reaching with her single free hand for the feeding bottle that was by now a permanent fixture on their bedside table. Just as she was bringing that up to Harald's mouth, a soft scratching noise began from the other side of their thickset oak bedroom door. Walking over and swinging this door open, Hiccup was faced with a decidedly bleary-looking Toothless, who padded softly into the room as soon as there was enough space between the door and the doorframe.

"Hey bud" said Hiccup, stepping aside to let the dragon slip past him. About two weeks after his son had been born, Hiccup had discovered quite by accident one night that Toothless seemed able to calm Harald down, where he himself had been failing. It didn't work every time, but just as with Hiccup and Astrid, Toothless' ears had become finely tuned to the baby's cries such that he was awake the moment it started up, and would invariably be upstairs not long after that.

After all, it was in everyone's interest for the infant's tantrums to last for as little time as possible.

Hiccup had to admit that, despite how well he knew Toothless and how good-natured he knew the dragon to be, he had been astonished at just how well Toothless handled suddenly having a very young child around the house. All the rough-and tumble that Hiccup and Toothless had used to indulge in, even after Hiccup had lost his leg, with the swinging from ceiling beams and jumping off roofs and all sorts besides, had stopped the moment Harald came into the equation. Often during the day when the baby became tired, (which Hiccup noted with some sense of irony tended to happen an awful lot during the day, and not nearly enough at night) Toothless would simply sit down on the floor of their house and they would gently lie Harald down into the crook formed between the dragon's torso and front leg, and Toothless would stay like that for hours, nudging Harald every so often with his snout to keep him in place whenever it seemed he was about to slip, but otherwise not moving at all, allowing the child to rest against his muscular flank as if it were his own offspring there. For some reason, maybe the warmth, the baby seemed to sleep better like this than in any bed or cot they could provide.

So it had become routine that Toothless would make an appearance in

their bedroom whenever Harald was fretting, as an added weapon in the arsenal arrayed at trying to quiet the little terror down. Often it would work, and the child would gurgle happily, pat Toothless clumsily on the nose a couple of times and then fall asleep again, but as Hiccup watched Toothless peering at the bundle in Astrid's arms and crooning softly, he noted with dismay that this time, that wasn't what was happening. The infant continued his squalling, swatting irritably at the bottle in Astrid's hand, making it quite plain that he wouldn't be that easily placated.

"He doesn't need changing, does he?"

"I don't \_think\_ soâ€|" Astrid said, sniffing the air by way of making sure. "Nope, it's not thatâ€|"

"Maybe he just wanted some attention?"

Astrid glanced back up at Hiccup for a moment, her eyes bright with mirth and suddenly smiling ear to ear, before she redirected her attention back to their son.

"Is that it? Are you annoyed that we were trying to get some sleep in between your tantrums instead of paying attention to you, you little \_mischief\_?" Astrid asked, playfully prodding at the infant's tiny nose to punctuate her rhetorical question â€" and surely enough, just as quickly as he'd started, the child stopped his screaming and, after a moment in which a look of plain befuddlement crossed his face, he gurgled happily and reached out to clumsily palm at Astrid's nose by way of reciprocating the gesture.

"Oh I s\_ee\_, it's like \_that\_ is it?"

Astrid's voice was dripping with false, humorous indignation as she set Harald down on their bed and proceeded to tickle the child rapidly up and down his torso, eliciting a squeal of delight and an enormous, toothless grin that resembled Toothless' own efforts unnervingly well.

Hiccup could only watch, unable to stop a broad and unabashed smile from planting itself firmly across his features as he watched the two people he most loved in the world so full of the joy of life. It was moments like these that gave him those rare glimpses into just how lucky he was.

Of course, mischief wasn't far from his mind either. Quietly, he stole up behind Astrid, whom he thought to be so fatally, uncharacteristically preoccupied that it was practically her own fault that he was about to do what he was about to do, and quickly reached out and squeezed her sides, right in the spot where he knew her to be most ticklish.

She still reacted more than he expected her to though, leaping spectacularly backwards into him with a startled yelp, and sending them both sprawling in peals of uncontrollable laughter that had started before they even hit the floor â€" laughter that only redoubled when Toothless reappeared at the door wearing an expression that could only have been described as completely exasperated, with one cocked eyebrow and, Hiccup could have sworn, an audible sigh as the dragon took in the chaos.

\_And you complain when your son makes a racket at an ungodly hour in the morning, \_Toothless seemed for all the world to be saying.

Between gasps for air, and fighting to control her laughter, Astrid finally managed to choke out, "Do you seeâ€| what happensâ€| when he wants \_attention\_? We'd have been better off trying to sleep through itâ€| andâ€| and thenâ€|" before finally giving up on finishing her sentence and collapsing back into roaring laughter.

They remained like that for a good five minutes, during which time Harald managed somehow to overcome the cacophony and fall asleep again. Once Astrid had finally managed to clamber up off the floor, she scooped him up and placed him gently back into his cradle, whilst Hiccup clambered back into their bed, his weariness rapidly returning as his eyelids started to droop, and he held the corner of the cover up for Astrid to lie down next to him.

Pulling her close to him with the effortless familiarity it had taken him so long to feel comfortable with, and feeling her settle against his stomach as he spooned up against her, through the fog of descending sleep he finally murmured, "Do you think he'll be up again tonight?"

The reply just barely registered, but it made him smile nonetheless.

"He's had enough attention for one night. I'm not moving."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Well? Hate it, despise it or loathe it?<strong>

\*\*See, this is what choice looks like now!  
/political...\*\*

\*\*Seriously, thanks for taking the time to get to this stupid spiel of mine at the bottom. As a reward, I shall keep it brief. REVIEW!  
PLEASE!\*\*

End  
file.